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ABSTRACT

This report, one of a series of case studies on mainstreaming efforts, describes a self-contained class for nine severely mentally and multiply handicapped 16- to 21-year-olds in an urban middle school. Following a description of the physical and social environment is a review of the history of the program begun in 1978-79. The author observes that peer interaction and exposure has been limited. Curricular and scheduling details are noted, as is inclusion of the class in a program featuring industrial arts, home economics, art, physical education and music rotation. Teacher and administrator characteristics are considered. The question of whether the program fits a mainstreaming definition is examined, with limited evidence cited to support the program's success. (CL)

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A Feather In The Cap: A Self Contained Classroom For Severely Mentally Handicapped 16-21 Year Old Students In An Urban Middle School

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Introduction

Murphy Middle School is located in an old urban neighborhood populated with a diverse mixture of university folk, poor, young professional couples and elderly. The streets are lined with modest wood frame one but mainly two family houses in various stages of repair, disrepair and renovation.

The building itself, a two story brick structure built around 1900 and for a long time a high school, does not quite fit into the landscape. Its mass overpowers the small homes which in places are only the width of a street away. There has been controversy during the last few years about the schools place in the community. Complaints that students and their friends have been distructive of property and rowdy after school events are made. There have been rumors that as part of school consolidation, Murphy school will be closed soon. That talk has caused alarm in some, especially some local parents who see strengths in this neighborhood school and insist that they be maintained. Whether the school will be closed or not has not been decided, but the possibility creates an air of uncertainty and raises questions in the staffs' minds about investing themselves in creating programs that might not last. In addition to the unsettling prospect of the school closing is the notion held by staff that these middle school adolescents are going through a difficult phase and as a result they are a tough, crazy lot to work with.

Enter into this environment, nine "multiply handicapped severely retarded" young adults, the program developed for them is the focus of this case study.

Setting

The Physical Environment

The interior of the school is well-kept. The old metal lockers lining the corridors are brightly painted and the floors shine. The first floor includes offices, cafeteria, art studio, shop and gymnasium as well as several classrooms. The second floor is primarily classrooms but also include the library, a small gym and the teachers' lounge.

The special education classroom is Room 220 located on the main corridor of the second floor. The only other "special ed" in the building is a resource room near the offices on the main floor. The school secretary describes it proudly as "...a nice bright airy room..." The special ed teacher feels strongly about retaining the room next year.

Clearly designed as a home economics laboratory, Room 220 includes a kitchen-like work space with sinks, refrigerator, stove and cupboards. In the northeast corner of the room there is a small circle of student desks. At several places there are large formica tables pushed together for work areas. These are generally used for one-to-one instruction. In addition, a teacher's desk stands near the east wall and various shelves and cupboards line the walls. A small laundry room adjoins the main classroom.

This is the first year that the special ed program has been assigned to Room 220 and the environment still has an unsettled look. While there are stacks of vocational materials in various places, there is little use of the ample shelf space. The special ed teacher feels that she inherited a good deal of grime and junk and that she has had little time to improve the physical environment. In fact, she does seem to be taking rather small, [illegible] from typical students was still taped on the cupboards. A "humorous" poster depicting a task analysis of drinking from a glass (i.e., "put lips to glass...

no points if liquid is spilled on back of head") hung over the sink. By May, the artwork was replaced with large colored pictures and the poster had been removed. Time constraints may be, as the teacher suggests, a primary difficulty in doing more with the physical environment but she also has a somewhat tentative approach toward such changes. For example, when discussing the disarray in the laundry room, she said, "Some of this stuff is from the sixties but I don't know... Somebody might want it so I don't throw it out."

In spite of the room's vaguely unsettled look, the overall impression created is bright and cheerful. The walls have been painted recently and the kitchen and work areas are clean and neat looking. The physical appearance of Room 220 is very much in keeping with the larger school environment.

The Social Environment

Murphy is considered to be a relatively small school by its principal, who says he knows about 90% of its 450 students by name. Although the ubiquitous jeans and t-shirts initially mask differences, the student population reflects the diversity in the neighborhood. About fifty five percent of the students are white, about forty five percent are black and they represent a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds.

The social patterns among the students seem to indicate the existence of several coexisting social "environments". Mr. Dunn, the principal, says, "The image that this building has had for the last ten years has been that it's a rough, tough place... That if you go there, you get jacked up in the lav and they steal your lunch money... Kids are fighting all the time... Stuff like that. Point of fact, it is not true." Murphy's reputation as a "tough" social environment seems partly deserved.

Each visit to the school office demonstrated that a large portion of Mr. Dunn's time was being spent on efforts to control student behavior. Stolen property, fighting, unauthorized absence from school seemed to be fairly routine occurrences. At times the adults give the impression that their hard tough stance is barely containing the youthful and aggressive energy of some students. The special education teacher feels overwhelmed by this segment of the student population. "You wouldn't believe some of these kids," she said, shaking her head. "I'd never been around black city kids and you just wouldn't believe it."

However, Murphy also has a contingent of bright, alert and involved students who seem to meet in the cafeteria and in the halls and to go their own way. Posters indicate diverse student interests such as bake sales, skate-a-thons, drama groups, etc.. Even limited observation of and conversation with typical students revealed some bright, articulate teenagers. It should not be assumed that Murphy's social climate is a simple black/white or lower-class/middle class dichotomy. For example, in describing the problems in the student population, one regular class teacher remarked, "And then there's the university kids. I mean I believe in people achieving their full potential and all that but it's the kids that suffer."

The social environment of the adults in the school seems in some ways to parallel that of the students. The teachers are, as the art teacher put it, "close...in groups." The special education teacher laments "From what I understood when I came here, it wasn't a very close knit school. There are friendly groups but I don't think, as a whole, they're not that close. Then there's a whole black and white thing. That probably has something to do with it." Some of the adults seem to feel overwhelmed by the demands of Murphy school and to feel discouraged or negative about the

school or its students. This mind-set may set the stage for negative feelings about "mainstreaming" of any sort. For example, one regular class teacher fairly erupted with frustration at the inclusion of handicapped children (not those in this study) in regular classrooms. "What do we do in a classroom," she complained. "How do we handle our other children? What kind of training should they be getting before these other children come in? What kind of extra help will these children need when they're in my room? And how do I handle that when I have twenty-five others? They're just dumping them on us without giving us any kind of help, or training or anything else."

The Special Ed Program

History

The focus of these observations was a largely self-contained program for students aged 16-21 who have been labeled severely mentally handicapped. Introduced in 1978, the program was considered innovative because it brought previously institutionalized students into a typical public school setting. Fieldnotes from an observer at Murphy school during the fall of 1978 indicate that the program was initiated by Bill Perry, the special administrator for the city school district. Murphy school was chosen for the program's location (even though it is a junior high) because "there was space and the administration was willing."

In 1978/1979 there were six special education programs at Murphy school mainly for moderately mentally handicapped and/or emotionally disturbed students. At that time there were two co-principals: Mr. Quinn, a dynamic black man from the South and Mr. Dunn, a young white man in his second administrative post. According to all reports, Mr. Quinn was extremely supportive of the special ed programs at Murphy school. When he resigned,

Mr. Dunn became the sole administrator. At the same time, four of the special ed classrooms were relocated. The "how" and "why" of this change is still a source of concern at Murphy and was discussed by several staff members.

Special ed personnel feel strongly that the reduction of special ed classrooms at Murphy is a direct result of Mr. Dunn's dislike of special education. One staff member says, vehemently, "Mr. Dunn pushed them all out. It's his decision you know. He has the right to say whether we stay or go." This attitude fosters constant uncertainty about possible relocation which seems to be made worse by not knowing why they had not been moved out last year.

Mr. Dunn's actions appear to have been based on concern for the continued existence of Murphy school. He believes that maintaining a high enrollment is imperative if Murphy school is to remain open. The more prosperous families in the neighborhood must be convinced to leave their children in the public school system rather than enrolling them in private or parochial schools. The struggle to hold these families leads Mr. Dunn to a concern with what he calls the "tone" of the school. Of the relocated special education classes, he says, "...the EMR classes, they were something else! These kids were able to pass as ordinary people... Whatever that means...at home and in the street, but academically they were having real trouble. Naturally, they became behavior problems. There got to be a bunch of them running through the halls. It gets back to what I was talking about before...tone. There were just too many classes here. They tilted the balance, if you know what I mean. We had about 480 kids and 60 were special ed... That's too many. Far more than you'd find in the general population. Now they're dispersed and that's the way it should be."

The two remaining special ed programs include the self-contained classroom described in this study and a resouce room.* Why was a program serving such very impaired students one of the two programs chosen to stay? Special ed personnel ascribe the choice to public relations. The former special ed teacher says, "We got so much attention last year! It was a one-of-a kind program and we just got a lot of positive feedback... Mr. Dunn just couldn't pull back all that support. The program was like a feather in his cap... That's why he kept it."

Mr. Dunn offers a different rationale: "...it really added something to have the kids in the regular program have the experience of being exposed to someone really different." The fact that the students in question are <u>really</u> different may indeed be a factor in their acceptability. These students could not "pass as ordinary people" and therefore were clearly identifiable as handicapped as opposed to being thought of as "bad" or "tough". In addition, they are not integrated in regular classes as were the less handicapped students.

The special ed staff continues to react to last years changes. Although Mr. Dunn's comments indicate he expects the special ed program to be at the school next year. The special ed teacher is not convinced. If and when a move is planned, she feels she will be the last to know.

*Footnote: For the remainder of this study, the designation "Special ed" will refer to the self-contained program, its teacher or its students.

Students

There are currently nine students enrolled in the program under observation: five are female, four are male. All are between the ages of 16 and 21. They were selected at random from two schools exclusively for the disabled when the program began last year. Two students are new this year.

All of the students in this classroom are markedly different from other students at Murphy school. Several have physiological features associated with retardation. Most have extremely poor motor coordination. Even the most advanced students have only rudimentary language. The teachers use sign to a limited extent. The majority reside at T.E.D., a state institution for the mentally handicapped. Only one student resides at home. Although one might expect an additional difference between handicapped students and their younger peers in the area of physical maturity, in fact, most of the students are small and physically immature.

Descriptive material prepared by the special ed teacher indicates the official classroom designation is "multiply handicapped, severely mentally retarded." Her written student profiles describe the student's intellectual functioning as ranging between three and seven years. In addition, one student is described as cerebral palsied and one as autistic.* Having previously worked in restricted institutional settings, the special ed teacher finds herself impressed with the strengths of her students. "To me," she confided, "These kids are brilliant." She compares them favorably with both typical kids, who she sees as threatening, and with the less impaired resource room students, "A lot of their (resource room

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*Note: Teacher prepared student profiles are attached.

students) behavior is just emotional problems. They just seem to be troublemakers rather than outcasts like my kids. They're not retarded, they're just troublemakers." Although she describes her students as "outcasts", Mrs. Adams and her aides are, in fact, somewhat defensive about "their" students. Whenever they suspected that the observer had spoken to a typical student or staff member about the special ed students, they were quick to ask what "the verdict" had been and were anxious that people feel positively about their students.

Mrs. Adams feels there is a clean difference between her student's behavior at Murphy school and their behavior at T.E.D.. For example, in describing one student's return after an outing she said, "The minute we got back into the building (T.E.D.) he started that loud talking...really institutional behavior. I mean he looks so normal and then once he gets in the building he acts retarded again." From brief observation at T.E.D., however, the more salient difference was in the teacher's behavior. Within the institutional setting, Mrs. Adams shouted at individual students, showed insensitivity to student needs and barely communicated with adult staff...all extremely discrepant with her usual behavior. It is difficult to say from limited observation whether her behavior change was in response to or a cause of changes in student behavior, or perhaps grows out of a need to demonstrate control of students to the S.D.C. staff.

The principal's view of the special ed students is a major issue among the special ed personnel. Mr. Dunn knows the students by name and repeated several anecdotes about them. He described them as extremely low functioning and feels that their current program pushes them to the limit of their competence. The special ed personnel feel that Mr. Dunn has a negative attitude toward "their" students and this concern reappears

again and again in conversation. For example, an aide told the following anecdote: "One day I was standing in the lunch line with Liz... The kids are supposed to line up against the wall and one girl was standing out of line. Mr. Dunn came up and told her to get back in line. She said, 'I can't" and rolled her eyes. (O.C. The impression was that standing back in line would have put her next to Liz.) Mr. Dunn told her that she had to get in line but she didn't. She ran to the back of the line instead. Then he looked at me and laughed. I really don't think he should have laughed. Liz didn't really catch what was going on. The girl was sort of funny, I guess, but he shouldn't have laughed. Even if Liz didn't see him, the other kids did. He really has a sort of disdain for these kids." There was no opportunity to observe Mr. Dunn interacting with special ed students. While he did not reveal his personal attitude toward students in conversation, he was always positive in his comments about the program. Nevertheless a recurring and strong criticism of Mr. Dunn is that he does not value lower functioning students.

Peer Exposure and Interaction

The principal feels that the exposure of typical students to those who are radically different is the major value of this program. Almost all school personnel interviewed mentioned social interaction between typical and handicapped students as an important facet of the program. Time and time again, the adults interviewed referred to interaction in the halls and in the cafeteria. Yet direct observation indicates that Murphy school students are often confused or uncertain about how to relate to their handicapped peers and that what little interaction occurs is as likely to be positive as negative.

Some typical students seem simply confused or misinformed about the abilities of the special ed students. For example, consider the following exchange between the observer and typical students who had shared a lunch table with a special ed student:

> "I notice Liz ate lunch with you," I said wondering if I could start a conversation.
>
> "Oh! Did she say anything to you? Was she upset?" asked a young blonde girl with a note of genuine concern in her voice.
>
> "No! Why should she be upset?" I asked mystified.
>
> "Well, we didn't talk to her or anything," she answered.
>
> "Why not?" I asked
>
> The blonde paused for a moment and then said, "I didn't know what she would understand."

One area of potential in this program is the involvement of regular Shapem teachers (shop, home economics, art, physical education and music) with the special class. While this part of the program is discussed in detail under curriculum, one of its biggest contributions may be that these regular class teachers are providing typical students with models of interaction with handicapped students. For example, one young girl was observing the special ed class in the gym. She watched the gym teacher closely as he interacted with the special ed. students and she appeared to be positive about and interested in the students herself. Her positive feelings about the class seemed intertwined with her positive feelings about the gym teacher and her observation of the pleasure he found in his work with the class. The music teacher described a similar incident in which he noticed his typical students closely observing a chance conversation with a special ed student.

Another peer perspective on the special ed students comes from the resource room students. To some extent, the comments of these mildly handicapped students revealed some empathy for their more severely handicapped peers:

> "A building's a building. If we can be here, so can they," said one student.
>
> "Yeah, like D.B., he be callin' them names. Crippled mother-fuckers and all that. It's not right," said another boy.

The resource room students knew three special ed. students by name and expressed a special preference for two - one because of his "good attitude" (i.e., fit in with social expectations, joined in athletics) and one because he had spent some time in the resource room. Their conversation included a variety of scrambled ideas about "retards" including that they are fast runners! The resource room teacher thinks that the students attitudes toward the "retards" may have to do with their own sense of being stigmatized. She explained:

> "I've had a lot of kids in the regular population come in and want to know, 'what is this room about? They're crazy kids!' You know just like this class sees the class upstairs (special ed classroom) as strange, some people see these people as strange...in a lot of ways they're in the same predicament as far as being "special" or something different."

Some of the typical students at Murphy displayed extremely negative behavior and/or attitudes toward the special ed students. In some cases the negative behavior had nothing to do with the particular special ed student involved but seemed more a response to a stereotype of a "retarded" student. For example, consider the following exchange:

> "I'm observing...and I noticed that you didn't want Liz to sit at your table. Why not?"

> "Aww, she makes me sick. How would you like to sit at a table with someone drooling and slobbering all over everything. It'd make anybody sick." (O.C., Liz had neither drooled nor slobbered.)

In other cases the negative feelings of typical students seemed to grow from a misunderstanding of some particular behavior of a special ed student. For example, one special ed student who does custodial work around the building must now be accompanied by a teacher. His friendly but physical pats of greeting were alarming some of the female students.

Support for peers attempts to understand the special ed students is non-existent. The principal states that it is simply not a priority and that in any case such programs can easily slip into condescension when done by "someone who is not trained to do this sort of thing." When the special ed teacher complained about teasing and negative interaction, he suggested that she present information to the health classes. She feels intimidated by regular class students and says that she is "not trained for" presentations to junior high students. The regular class teachers, overwhelmed by other issues, may not see intervention in peer relations as <u>their</u> job either. In short, because the special ed teacher feels trained and responsible for <u>special</u> students and the regular teachers feel trained and responsible for <u>regular</u> students, facilitating interaction is nobody's job.

<u>Curriculum</u>

The classroom program, as described by the special ed teacher, includes the following areas: Personal Adjustment (grooming, travel skills, socialization); Communication (receptive and expressive language, signing); Work Adjustment (task completion, following directions, independent work completion); Home Living (setting the table, preparing simple food, simple cleaning chores); Functional Academics (telling time, counting change, functional sight words, printing names); and Leisure Time Activities. Classroom observation indicated that activities were planned in all these

areas, with one exception: No systematic planning for the development of interpersonal skills was observed.

Each lesson or activity presented in this class is broken into small concrete steps which are repeated many times. Teachers use modeling, physical prompts and verbal direction. There is almost constant feedback to the student within a lesson. Correct answers are verbally praised; wrong answers are promptly corrected. Almost all instruction is one-to-one and teachers keep records of student responses. I.E.P.'s are detailed and individualized. The following lesson is typical:

> The lesson centered on "under", "over" and "in". "I noticed people having trouble with those when they are trying to follow directions in the kitchen," explained Nancy.
>
> Nancy gave concrete demonstrations using her own body and Peg's body before beginning a series of questions and directions. "Put your hand under your chin." "Put your hands under the desk." "Where are your hands?" Peg modeled gestures exactly but had trouble articulating "under" and "over". At two points Peg modeled gestures that had accompanied Nancy's demonstration but were clearly extraneous to the lesson and Nancy suppressed a giggle.
>
> After about thirty trials using concrete objects and body parts, Nancy introduced cards featuring a large black "X" under, on and inside various pictured objects. Peg's failure rate increased substantially. Neither teacher nor pupil seemed frustrated, however, Nancy returned to using concrete objects.

The daily schedule begins at 7:30 with the arrival of the special ed staff at the home or institution of the students. The staff works one-to-one with each student as they shower and dress in an effort to teach self-help skills. While such a goal sounds appropriate, in some ways the self-help training is an empty gesture. When the teachers are not available, T.E.D. staff provide what the special ed teacher describes as "custodial care", i.e., there is little opportunity to practice dressing skills. When asked if a student's self-help skills had shown improvement as a result of this program, their teacher replied that he had the skills "with him its just behavior".

The special ed students arrive at Murphy around 9:00 a.m.. Some of the students go directly to an out of the building work training program and others go, on a rotating basis, to a work readiness program at Hughes. Usually four or five students remain at Murphy for a morning of one-to-one instruction. For those who stay at Murphy, the first part of the morning centers around using money, telling time, printing names or recognizing sight words. The second part of the morning might include laundry, ironing, shopping, etc.. During this later part of the morning individuals may receive speech therapy and one student goes to a regular art class (with an aide and when everyone's schedule permits). This is the only point at which the handicapped students attend regular classes and it is not done on a regular basis. The special ed teacher explains:

> "It's partly because of scheduling but it's also a matter of priorities. You know art is important but there's a lot of things I want them to do in class."

While art is seen as an opportunity for the special ed student to interact with peers, one hour of observation in that setting revealed no instance of interaction. Because art is actually part of the "Shapem" program, it is discussed in more detail below.

> At noon, two students, chosen on a rotating basis, prepare, eat and clean up after their own lunch. The others eat in school cafeteria. Participation in the lunch period with typical peers is highly taken by staff as an opportunity for interaction. However, the special ed students, with one exception, choose to eat together. The typical kids choose not to join them. Two days of observation in the school cafeteria yielded one example of interaction--and that was negative.

After lunch, individual and small group activities continue. Two students perform simple custodial chores around the school and are paid for their labor. Apart from the work training this experience provides, it gives these students greater exposure to the school community. In fact, they were among the few special ed students mentioned by name by peers.

The final activity of the day is participation in the "Shapem" program. From 1:15 to 2:00 the special ed students were to have gone as a class to shop, home economics, art, physical education and music on a six weeks rotation. In fact, this is only partly the case.

Shapem

The inclusion of the special ed class in the Shapem program is new this year. Astonishingly different views of its origin were offered. Mrs. Edwards, the special ed teacher at the time, explained that she had approached the principal about integrating the special ed students in regular Shapem classes. He, in turn, suggested that the special ed class go as a group to the Shapem teachers while still allowing for the possibility of some individuals being integrated. Mrs. Edwards felt that Mr. Dunn's offer grew out of a need to account for the time of the Shapem teachers. Mr. Dunn himself describes the special ed participation in Shapem as something he organized with the Shapem teachers both to provide increased services to special ed and to solve "a couple of other things as well." The Shapem teachers are generally unsure of where the initiative began and the tend to blame (or credit) "the law", "downtown", or Mr. Dunn. For example, one teacher offers an explanation tinged with some resentment:

"Well, it came down from our principal and I believe that he said ...that it is now required by law that these students get more than they're getting and that we should start getting them more into the normal school program. And he felt the Shapem subjects would be most suitable for them at this time. And so, he just said that we <u>have</u> to teach these classes. That's it!"

The reactions to this innovation ranged from strongly negative to matter-of-factly positive. Each of the Shapem teachers sees the reaction of the group as negative but their own reaction as (relatively) more positive. The major factor in this negative reaction seemed to be a predictable one - fear of the unknown. For example, the most vocal opponent of the program when it was first proposed was asked to describe the <u>worst</u> thing about her experience this year:

"The worst thing was before they came...not knowing what they would be like."

In some cases, information which was meant to reassure made teachers more panicky. One teacher said:

"And then they told us that there was nine students and we could have up to four aides...that got me nervous! I said, 'That sounds like too many. You mean you need that many to control these kids?'"

At one point the negative feelings were so intense that some regular teachers considered calling in the union.

Lack of training was another factor mentioned in association with the negative reaction. Of the five Shapem teachers interviewed, most had only minimal experience with special education - usually just the experience of having resource room students in their regular classes. Two of the more positive teachers had special ed experiences in other settings. None had pre-service training in special ed.

There was no formal in-service training offered. The principal felt it should have been done but "was not a priority". The special ed teacher during that period had qualms about too much in-service prior to a program's initiation:

"Sometimes it's better not to do so much preparation in advance. It's like a Rosenthal-Jacobs thing. You say the kids will be this and that in an inservice and the kids will be exactly the way the inservice described them."

On the other hand, she described herself as offering a great deal of support to the home economics teacher - the first teacher to have the group in rotation:

"I really inserviced her though. I went in with materials; I gave her a book; I taught her about age appropriate stuff..."

In contrast, the current special ed teacher is much more timid about offering specific advice to Shapem teachers and tends to defer to them as the specialists. For example, after commenting on one teacher's strengths and weaknesses, she adds:

"I can't really tell him what to do - he's the expert in music."

Enriching and complicating the inservice picture are two district specialists who are available to consult with Shapem teachers in the area of service to the severely handicapped. These two specialists see themselves as being available to, but not intruding upon, the Shapem teachers at Murphy school. Mr. Quinn, the specialist in the area of physical education, consulted with the Murphy school physical education instructor about a dozen times. Miss Lang, a specialist in arts and crafts, consulted with the shop and music teachers twice but not at all with the art teacher. These two specialists do not see themselves as introducing any complications. They are available with ideas for curriculum but see the regular classroom teacher as "the expert on her children." The former special ed teacher disagrees:

"It's much better if it's teacher to teacher... I mean here's a person (referring to the specialists) coming out of left field to tell people what to do."

Given the announcement that they would be teaching nine severely mentally handicapped students, the five Shapem teachers reacted differently. There were differences in their tendency to seek help, in their attempts to modify curriculum and in the degree to which they participated in the program. On the other hand, all five now report positive feelings about their special ed Shapem class.

In spite of the fact that lack of training seemed to be a continuing lament, only two of the Shapem teachers actively sought help from the special ed staff or resource personnel. Interestingly, one of the two was the most vocal opponent initially. In fact, the Shapem teacher whose initial response was most favorable ("Kids are kids - I'll take them.") was the least responsive to outside offers of help. One specialist describes the response of this teacher:

> "I went over to see her and she was really indignant - like 'what do you think you can tell me...?' She was really on my case."

The fact that this latter teacher was one of the few with prior special ed experience may have accounted for both aspects of her response.

Most, but not all, Shapem teachers made some attempt to modify goals, teaching techniques or content for the special ed students. There seemed to be three basic patterns. Some teachers did not really modify their programs. For example, contrast the following teacher/child interaction with the teaching episode described earlier:

> Mrs. Howard moved from child to child, offering a suggestion, demonstrating a technique... Coming to Kay's table, she observed Kay's work. Kay has been picking up one crayon at a time. Sometimes she names the color, mostly she colors small strips at random on the page. Silently, Mrs. Howard leaves and returns with a box of Payons and a small dish of water. "Would you like to try these, Kay?" She offers and demonstrates the technique. Kay looks interested. "Paper," she says. "You can use the same paper," suggests Mrs. Howard. Kay holds the payon but makes no attempt to use it. Mrs. Howard looks at her and then moves away. Kay picks up the paper Mrs. Howard used to demonstrate, tries a few strokes and then returns to her crayons. Mrs. Howard returns to observe and comments, "She knows what she wants."

Mrs. Howard believes that a style of observation and provision of appropriate materials and techniques is the best way to teach her subject. She used the same strategies with Kay that she used with her typical students and they are quite a contrast with the step by step analysis of the special ed teachers.

A second strategy for coping with the demands of the situation was exemplified by Mr. Hansen who drew on his knowledge of primary grade curriculum:

> "We're all certified K-12. I have worked with elementary school children and I've taught these same concepts to first graders... I looked at it more like an elementary school class."

The danger of this approach is noted in the special ed teachers description of Mr. Hansen:

> "(He) really interacts with the kids but there's a lot of stuff that's not age appropriate."

The two Shapem teachers who actively sought and received the most help were the two who apparently made the most appropriate curricular adaptations. For example, Mrs. Casey discussed various instructional strategies (i.e., modeling, using pictures, moving a student through an activity) with special ed teachers. She observed the special ed class and borrowed materials. According to the former special ed teacher, the preparation paid off:

> "I really think she did the best job... She was really direct with them and she developed pretty good relationships with them."

Similarly, the physical education teacher met with the district specialist about twelve times over the year. He was the only teacher who had the kind of individualized goals and record keeping that were used by the special ed staff. It seems clear that teachers must have available (and must accept!) some help in curriculum development for specialized groups. The frustration teachers feel in this area was described by one district specialist:

"Teachers think they're going to be held responsible to teach the same curriculum they teach to regular kids to special kids. I know Dan called up and said, 'These kids can't do this; they can't do that.' Well they're not going to master the team concept in basketball, for example. Maybe you have to break it down, go back to individual skills. Maybe you have to break that down even. These kids are hard to teach."

Not all Shapem teachers participated equally in the program. One Shapem teacher responded by taking one or two special ed students into one of her regular classes. Another took only half the group at a time. A third became so enthusiastic that he requested the group not rotate and kept them for 18 weeks! These differences were described by the principal as a matter of scheduling. One Shapem teacher presented an alternative explanation:

"It's just if you screamed loud enough, you didn't have to take them."

Whatever their initial fears or problems, all five Shapem teachers seem satisfied with their experience at this point. This satisfaction comes from different sources. One teacher who set specific goals feels pleasure at student progress. Another simply sees the program as having been the "right" thing to do. A third talks about his own growth:

"For me to see students like this...was an experience... (It) was a joy, because I didn't know they could latch on to a finer aspect of this world like music and they certainly could."

The special ed teacher also feels the program made a contribution to the education of both pupils and teachers:

"I think it's good for the kids to experience other teachers and not just have teachers who are going to know exactly how to treat them... It's good for the teachers too. I mean retarded people aren't always in the closet... I wish everyone could get a chance to see these kids so they wouldn't be afraid."

The Shapem program promises to be less controversial in 80/81.

The Staff

Mr. Dunn is a sandy haired, balding man in his thirties who seems to be constantly in motion, interacting with kids and staff. His early professional experience involved teaching affluent, academically oriented kids and he described his first year teaching in the Central City system as a rude awakening. He asked to be transferred from English to Reading almost immediately because he felt that "the wide range of needs" in the city's classrooms was "too much to handle." At the same time, he began course work in educational administration. Murphy school is his second administrative post. Mr. Dunn has never had any experience with special education procedures, curriculum or students.

Mr. Dunn's priorities for Murphy include maintaining a high enrollment, strengthening services for academically oriented students and maintaining a good image in the community. For example, he speaks of the programming with pride:

> "We will probably be the only middle school that offers two full years of science orientation to every student in the building... We have an excellent foreign language program...it's definitely the best in the country... We have a high density of youngsters who have been identified as talented and gifted and they tend to draw other kids."

Mr. Dunn describes his role as principal broadly. Staff interaction, student interaction, teacher/pupil interaction, physical plant, community relations, program development, implementation of school board policy and morale - all are seen as his responsibility.

Although in theory, the special ed classroom is part of this broad scope of responsibilities, in practice Mr. Dunn's relationship to the special ed program is distant. The special ed staff, in particular, are dissatisfied with the role Mr. Dunn plays. They frequently compare him

unfavorably with Mr. Quinn, the former principal. It is difficult for people to articulate the differences between the behavior of the two men. In addition, the two special ed. teachers interviewed had somewhat different perspectives on their own roles and thus had different expectations of the principal. The former teacher, experienced and assertive, describes the ideal administrator as supportive but not intrusive. Of Mr. Quinn, she says:

> He trusted my judgment. That's the biggest thing. He gave me complete freedom, complete flexibility.

Interestingly, Mr. Dunn also makes no attempt to intervene in the special ed program. But his behavior is perceived as distant and this distance is attributed to a devaluing of special ed programming. For Mrs. Adams, a first year public school teacher, this distance is not a plus:

> It's kind of confusing because we don't get a lot of supervision... We're in his building but he in a sense feels we're just housed here.

Mrs. Adams also feels responsible to a district special ed administrator with whom she has minimal communication. She added that if she really needs advice, she turns to the principal of . Apart from the presence or absence of supervision, the special ed teachers agreed on two key aspects of the principal's role which influenced their programs: his control of resources (everything from obtaining bus tokens to remaining in the building) and his influence on the attitudes of regular teachers toward special ed programs. As one teacher put it, there is something "inherently autocratic" about a principal's role.

When asked about evaluation of special ed staff, Mr. Dunn indicated that he had gone through the formal evaluation process required by the district. However, he also declared:

> I in no way see myself as a competent observer of the specialized techniques she (Mrs. Adams) would use.

Mr. Dunn described his evaluation of Mrs. Adams as including an examination of her personal and professional goals and of her ability to identify and plan for student needs. The evaluation was based on two visits to the classroom and a review of I.E.P.'s. While Mr. Dunn praised Mrs. Adams and her program, the evaluation raised some suspicions in the special ed room:

> After doing nothing all year, not coming in or offering help or anything, he writes all of these comments on the I.E.P.'s.

The Special Ed Staff

The special ed classroom is staffed by a certified special ed teacher, two teachers aides and one health aide. The teacher, however, does most of the planning and is primarily responsible for the program. Mrs. Adams is a small, slender woman in her late twenties. Her previous teaching experience has been with younger, profoundly delayed children in an institutional setting. This is her first public school experience.

In her classroom, Mrs. Adams has a confident tone in her voice and a business-like manner with the students. She is methodical and persistent and seems to eventually prevail, even in potential conflict situations. For example:

> Seventeen year old Ken circled the table to investigate the groceries. He attempted to grab a package from Liz's hands. "No", she roared. They physically struggled over the package and Ken pulled it away. Mrs. Adams came to Ken's side and quietly directed, "Give it back, Ken." No response from Ken. "Give it back," she repeated sternly. Still no response. She repeated her direction a third time, still calm. Ken slowly returned the package to Liz and turned away.

Both Mrs. Adams and one of the aides seem to have a closeness with students that is not apparent between regular class teachers and students. Physical gestures of affection, given and received or a moment of quiet companionship born simply of having spent a lot of time together seem to indicate that the special ed personnel do not have the same feeling of being "on guard" or of maintaining social distance that seems to characterize some interactions between regular class teachers and students. In addition, the staff seems to identify with the role of "outcasts" that they ascribe to their students. They were extremely interested in how others in the school viewed "their" students. Mrs. Adam's behavior toward one of her students in an institutional setting provided a jarring counterpoint to the style noted above. As noted earlier, it is difficult to determine the origin of this change.

Mrs. Adams is responsible for the direct supervision of three aides. Two are attractive women in their twenties who have had some college education and have been part of this program for two years. The third aide is a man in his thirties who was transferred to Murphy this year. The two female aides function very much like teachers in the classroom. While they do not plan curriculum, they teach specific concepts in a one-to-one situation and supervise small groups in activities. They accompany students to Shapem classes along with Mrs. Adams. Although one of these young women has a more informal, outgoing attitude than the other, both seem positive about the program. For example:

> It's a good program. Sometimes it's a little overstaffed. But other times, when all the kids are here, we wouldn't be able to get anything accomplished without all the adults.

Mrs. Adams, in turn, has an extremely positive view of these aides:

> Ellen and Kay are terrific. They've been here longer so in some ways they know more than I do... I've never had such good aides before.

There seems to be an easy give and take between the women in the room and matters such as classroom chores or lunch breaks seem to be easily arranged.

The role of the third aide is very different. On only one brief occasion was he observed teaching a specific concept. He was always the aide chosen to accompany students to work training or other out of building activities and thus spent far less time in the classroom. Mrs. Adams describes this aide's behavior as problematic.

> Hal hasn't picked up on anything, no ideas or teaching techniques or anything. I don't even think he likes some of the kids.

Mrs. Adams is not an assertive supervisor. She feels especially awkward with Hal because he is older and because he's a man. Although neither Ellen or Kay mentioned it, Mrs. Adams feels the two women resent their co-worker because he does "less work for more money." Evidently Hal is categorized as a health aide and the two women are categorized as teachers aides. The women investigated the possibility of changing their categorization but were denied the change, according to Mrs. Adams because of their sex.

Two different perspectives on the role of the teacher were evident in interviews. The first role, described by the former special ed teacher and the district specialists, involves an active assumption of advocacy and administrative responsibility. For example the involvement of regular teachers in the program is seen by some as dependent on the efforts of the special ed teacher. One specialist offered the following advice:

> Whether you can get them (regular teachers) to work with the kids depends on personality...if they like you personally.

For this reason, the former teacher saw formal inservice less effective than teacher to teacher contact with the special ed teacher diplomatically offering regular teachers information as necessary. By the same token, she saw herself as "managing" interaction with the principal:

> I don't believe some of the things I did. I said to the aides that I couldn't believe the way I was into playing the game... I mean sometimes you have to be manipulative.

Although several informants referred to aspects of this assertive teacher role, it is not the role assumed by the current teacher. Mrs. Adams is very focused on in-classroom activity. She does not see inservice of regular teachers as her responsibility. She does not see fostering interaction with typical kids as her responsibility. Her contact with adults outside her classroom is limited and based on formal channels of communication versus personal ones. She feels socially and professionally isolated from the rest of the staff. Whether this version of the teacher role is a result of Mrs. Adam's non-assertive, quiet nature, her lack of public school experience or a combination of factors is open to speculation.

Mrs. Adam's has carefully and methodically carried out the special ed program as she inherited it. She has not actively promoted or managed interaction between her classroom and the rest of the school. This has several implications. On the positive side it may encourage regular teachers to advocate themselves. For example, upon hearing that the special ed class was not being called down to assemblies, the music teacher took the matter up with the office himself. More likely, however, the result of Mrs. Adam's reticence is to deprive regular teachers of a valuable resource and to make further program growth less likely. For example, who initiates the next logical step in the Shapem Program? Not us, say the district specialists, "we're in no way anybody's supervisor." The Shapem teachers

have recovered from their initially negative reaction and may be open to further involvement but they are unlikely to initiate change. While Mr. Dunn responded positively to the initial request for Shapem services, he does not seem sufficiently involved to generate new ideas. Similar gaps have been discussed in the areas of inservice education and peer interaction. In short, although the program appears to have two administrators, it has administrative problems:

> No one is managing communication between regular and special ed teachers; no one is providing a vehicle for program change. Apparently this role was once filled by the former special ed teacher. Will Mrs. Adams fill the gap? In part, this depends on her recognizing that there is a gap. For example, when asked who advocates for her students, she paused for some time and then replied, "Me?" questioningly.

She may need more public school experience to decide that no one else will do it. It also depends on her personal abilities. Neither of her "supervisors" appear close enough to offer active support in expanding her role.

Is the Murphy Program Mainstreaming? Is It Successful?

If asked directly, most of the staff at Murphy defines mainstreaming as the inclusion of labeled children in typical classes. The Murphy program does not fit that definition. Yet, some people are reluctant to say that it's not mainstreaming. For example, the principal says:

> It's really mainstreaming in two different ways. First, these students are in the same building with regular kids, have lunch together and to a very limited extent participate in some regular classes together... It's not really integration, but it definitely qualifies as 'least restrictive environment.'

Another special ed staff member described it as "social interaction" vs. true "mainstreaming". The latter, according to Kay, requires that the regular class teacher accept the responsibility for the formulation of

specific goals. Other teachers feel the Murphy program is clearly not an example of mainstreaming. The special ed teacher herself seems particularly immune to this semantic delicacy and says quite plainly:

> This is not mainstreaming. Just to put a classroom into a (school) building versus putting it in a segregated setting.

It may be that the tendency to debate whether this is or is not an example of mainstreaming has to do with the severity of disability present in this student group. If they were students labeled TMR or EMR, it seems extremely unlikely that this program would be described as mainstreaming. The unspoken message at Murphy seemed to be: It's not really mainstreaming, but it's as close as this type of student has gotten.

If this isn't mainstreaming, should it be? One district specialist describes it as "Kindergarten-level mainstreaming". He explained that too often kids were thrown into an integrated setting without preparation. He sees the procedure of regular teachers working with the special ed class as a group as a first step:

> Some of these kids...can be moved into regular classes next year. Maybe they'd be in both classes for awhile and then the special class could be dropped.

While most of the Shapem teachers are open to further innovations, they expressed mixed feelings about integration in regular classrooms. Some typical comments:

> I'm sure that with an aide to watch them, they could do almost everything the others could do in regular classes...(but) the only advantage I might see would be for the other students... seeing them work...seeing how they function.

> I've been thinking about it. I wouldn't like to see them integrated in the regular classes. But there are a lot of kids in this school who could use some help with individual skills. I'd like to see about five of them help with Mrs. Adam's class in the gym.

Although there is the potential for movement toward "mainstreaming" in a more traditional sense, such movement would probably require an assertive advocate and at present there is not one.

Whether the program as it exists is considered "successful" was not a major issue at Murphy. Most people described success as 1) progress toward individual goals for students (i.e., more appropriate behavior, potential for sheltered workshop) and/or 2) a more general social acceptance (i.e., interaction, regular teachers feeling "comfortable" with kids). The administrative and staff changes discussed above seem to have affected this second component of "success" adversely. Progress in becoming an integral part of Murphy has been slow. As one district specialist put it:

> They still have a long way to go.

Clearly, the most powerful force now available is the Shapem program.

The definition of "success", the definition of "mainstreaming" even the style of teacher/principal interaction may have been influenced by the severity of the handicapping conditions of the students in this study. Consider this report of a conversation between principal and teacher:

> He said, 'I just looked at your I.E.P.'s. How do you do it? How do you stay in the classroom and not see any progress?' Well, you know I <u>see</u> progress. He just doesn't tune it to what we're doing.

The special ed personnel interviewed feel you have to work harder to get support for lower-functioning students. They feel the prevailing attitude is "why bother". Their struggle must be made more difficult by a paucity of models of successful mainstreaming for severely and profoundly handicapped students.